

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS
2003 GRAZING SEASON
PALOMAS ALLOTMENT (210)
SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST
CUBA RANGER DISTRICT

FINALIZED MAY 20th, 2003

_____	_____	_____
Gabriel Maestas & Son	Permittee	Date

_____	_____	_____
Gabriel & Christine Maestas	Permittee	Date

_____	_____	_____
William J. Eaton	Range Staff	Date

_____	_____	_____
Steve Romero	District Ranger	Date

Annual Operating Instructions Meeting held on:	_____
	Date

Persons Attending Meeting:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I. AUTHORIZATION

Permitted Numbers				2003 Authorized Numbers			
Permittee(s)	Head	Season	HMS	Head	Season	HMS	% Reduction
Gabriel Maestas & Son	60	6/1 to 10/31	302	60	6/1 to 10/31	301	0%
Gabriel & Christine Maestas	49	6/1 to 10/31	246	22	6/1 to 10/31	111	45%
Total	109		548	82		412	25%

2002 Grazing Season

Permitted Numbers				2002 Authorized Numbers			
Permittee(s)	Head	Season	HMS	Head	Season	HMS	% Reduction
Gabriel Maestas & Son	60	6/1 to 10/31	301	39	6/1 to 10/31	196	30%
Gabriel & Christine Maestas	49	6/1 to 10/31	246	32	6/1 to 9/30	129	30%
Total	148		698	91		420	40%

II. ROTATION SCHEDULE

Numbers of Cattle	Pasture	Grazing Period
82	Rincon	6/1 - 7/20
82	Sacatales	7/21 - 9/15
82	Minas	9/16 - 10/15
82	Palomas Holding	10/16 - 10/31

The above authorized numbers and season of use is no guarantee that they will stay on the allotment for the full season. Drought conditions and below average forage production may require that cattle will enter or be removed from the allotment later or earlier than expected. This decision will be made in cooperation with you and Forest Service personnel. Decisions will be based on the utilization of key species in key areas as outlined in this Annual Operating Instructions.

The routing plan described above is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances such as lack of water in pasture, adequate forage needs to avoid overuse within the pasture, etc. The Forest Service or the permittee can initiate changes of pastures outside of the above routing plan in coordination with this office. A written justification must be submitted by the permittee to this office before a change is made.

III. UTILIZATION/MONITORING

The proper utilization of forage is a critical factor in livestock management on the **Palomas** Allotment, allowable use is set at 40%. We will be checking levels of use during the grazing season. We will be visiting the allotment to insure that utilization levels are within recommended levels. This method will give us an accurate reading on the utilization levels on key grass species. Within the **Palomas** Allotment the Key Areas to be monitored will be:

TABLE 1

Site #	Key Area Location	Key Grass Species	Stubble Height
1	Sacatales - On mesa between American creek and Rito de las Palomas	Western Wheatgrass Mountain Muhley	4"-5" 4"-5"

Both the Forest Service and the permittee are responsible for monitoring use and stubble height on the allotment to ensure that proper use levels are not exceeded. If areas within a pasture or the pasture as a whole begin to approach the identified stubble heights, actions will need to be taken to limit additional forage use. We are primarily concerned with use levels in canyon bottoms where cattle tend to concentrate use on palatable feed. We have identified key areas to be monitored on this allotment (see attached map and Key Area description Table 1). The primary grass species on this allotment are outlined above. Please refer to Table 2 below for utilization characteristics.

Table 2. Qualitative characteristics of grazing intensity categories used to characterize New Mexico rangelands.

Qualitative Grazing Intensity Category	Use of Forage by Weight	Qualitative Indicators of Grazing Intensity
Light to non-use	0-30	Only choice plants and areas show use. There is no use of poor forage plants
Conservative	31-40	Choice forage plants have abundant seed stalks; Areas more than a mile from water show little use; About one third to one half primary forage plants show grazing on key areas.
Moderate	41-50	Most of accessible range show use; Key areas show patchy appearance with one half to two thirds of primary forage plants showing use; Grazing is noticeable 1-1½ miles from water
Heavy	51-60	Nearly all primary forage plants show grazing on key areas; Palatable shrubs show hedging; Key areas show a lack of seed stalks; Grazing is noticeable in areas over 1½ miles from water
Severe	61+	Key areas show a clipped or mowed appearance (no stubble ht.); Shrubs are severely hedged; There is evidence of livestock trailing to forage; Areas over 1½ miles from water lack stubble height.

Forage use levels should be monitored periodically by the permittee to aid in determining when livestock should be moved between pastures. Forest Service personnel will attempt to visit at

least one key area within each grazed pasture during the second half of the scheduled grazing period. If use within that key area is approaching allowable stubble heights then the remaining key areas will also be monitored and the pasture inspected to determine overall use patterns. This information will be used to determine if cattle are to be re-distributed within the pasture or removed from the pasture. See the monitoring Schedule for the **Palomas** Allotment on Table 3.

TABLE 3

Pasture	Key Area	Monitoring Date	Monitoring Type	Utiliz %	Stubble Ht.
Rincon	N/A	May 20 th 2003	Range Readiness Fence Inspection		
Sacatales	1	August 9 th 2003	RAM		
Minas	N/A	October 7 th 2003	RAM		
ALL	ALL	November 6 th 2003	End Season Monitoring		
The grazing permit holder is encouraged to participate in these inspections. We will try to follow this schedule as close as possible but due to our ever changing circumstances they may be cancelled, changed or not completed. We will try our best to keep you informed on changing events.					

IV. DEVELOPMENT WORK

In order to further develop the allotment, the Forest Service and the permittee have cooperatively agreed to complete the following projects. In general, Range Betterment Funds (derived from the grazing fees) can be used for approximately one-half of the cost of any project. Please be aware that it usually will be necessary to plan projects with at least one year lead time to allow required documentation and to obtain the necessary funding and clearances. Project work agreed to under Cooperative Improvement Modifications are to be completed within established time frames and to the standards attached to and made a part of the agreement unless otherwise modified by the Forest Officer.

1. Projects remaining from previous years:
 - * N/A
2. Projects for this year
 - * NEPA Analysis
3. Special maintenance projects for this year:
 - * N/A

V. MAINTENANCE OF IMPROVEMENTS

Maintenance of improvements i.e. (fences, springs, tanks, wells) should be complete and in satisfactory condition prior to entry date. Please refer to attached map for your responsibilities. **If your maintenance responsibilities do not meet satisfactory condition you will not be permitted to turn out or your entry date may be delayed.**

VI. SPECIAL MITIGATION MEASURES

To attain conformance with Amendment of Forest Plans and the final U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service "Biological Opinion for Ongoing Livestock Grazing Activities on Allotments" which determine a No Affect and/or May Affect Not Likely to Adversely Affect on your allotment, **the following conditions must be met.**

Forage Utilization

Forage use by grazing animals will be maintained at or above a condition which assures recovery and continued existence of threatened and endangered. In order to attain this standard, the above site specific key areas and key forage utilization standards have been developed for the **Palomas** Allotment.

Construction Activities

Seasonal restrictions (March 1-August 15) on construction activities apply in known breeding areas for threatened and endangered species. Any new construction or reconstruction activities will need to be coordinated with this office. **This does not apply to routine maintenance of existing range improvements.**

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL

District Ranger decisions regarding issuance, denial, or administration of grazing and livestock use permit may be appealed in accordance with 36 CFR 251, Subpart C. The following standard paragraph is included in this Annual Operating Plan for the purpose of ensuring that you are aware of your appeal rights.

This Annual Operating Plan (AOP) is hereby made a part of your Term Grazing Permit. The instructions included as part of this AOP are subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 251. Appeals must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 251.88 "Filing Procedure" and 36 251.90, Content of Notice of Appeal", filed with the Reviewing Officer Leonard Atencio, Santa Fe National Forest, 1474 Rodeo Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505, within 45 days of the date of this decision with a copy simultaneously sent to the Deciding Officer, District Ranger Steve

Romero, PO Box 130, Cuba, New Mexico 87013. The Notice of Appeal must include sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed (36 CFR 251.90).

The permittee should always ensure that full and sincere attempts to resolve disagreements through working with the District Ranger has occurred prior to filing a Notice to Appeal. The District Ranger is willing to meet with any permittee to discuss any issues related to the action. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your Annual Operating Instructions please feel free to contact our office and talk to Jim Eaton (Acting Range Staff), or Steve Romero (District Ranger).

District Ranger

Sincerely Steve Romero